CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

On 1 October 1979, President Carter announced before a television audience the existence of the Rapid Deployment Forces (RDF). Intended to be a mobile force capable of responding to contingencies anywhere in the world, the RDF has had no new combat forces created specifically for it. Rather, the RDF has been composed mostly of existing forces that already have commitments, primarily to Western Europe (NATO) and Northeastern Asia (principally Korea).

The composition of the RDF, as conceived by the previous Administration and as it has remained until now, is illustrated in Table 1. All told, the number of troops with RDF assignments is 222,000--approximately 11 percent of all active-duty personnel from all four branches of the U.S. armed services. 1/ The current Administration, however, plans to increase the size of the RDF over the next five years. Press reports indicate that the size will nearly double to approximately 440,000 people. 2/ At the same time, though other planners argue that a smaller RDF might suffice.

PRINCIPAL ISSUES AND PLAN OF THE STUDY

Though the RDF has since its creation been a subject of considerable debate, relatively little attention has been paid to its implications for the defense of NATO or for the U.S. defense budget. To date, most concern has focused on practical but narrower questions. What types of forces should the RDF consist of? What combat units? Where should the RDF be prepared to fight? Particularly in light of the Administration's planned numerical expansion of the RDF, this study provides analytical background

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1. Although some reserve component forces may actually deploy with the RDF, early deploying combat and support units will be drawn primarily from active forces. See U.S. Department of Defense, Annual Report to Congress, Fiscal Year 1984, p. 199.

2. See U.S. Department of Defense, Annual Report to Congress, Fiscal Year 1984, p. 198; and "Special U.S. Force for Persian Gulf Is Growing Swiftly," The New York Times, October 25, 1982, p.1.

TABLE 1. U.S. FORCE COMMITMENTS TO THE CURRENT RDF, BY SERVICE

Combat Forces	Numbers of Personnel
ARMY	
82nd Airborne Division 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) 6th Combat Brigade (Air Cavalry) Various ranger and special forces units	100,000
AIR FORCE	
1st Tactical Fighter Wing (F-15) 27th Tactical Fighter Wing (F-111) 347th Tactical Fighter Wing (F-4) 354th Tactical Fighter Wing (A-10) 366th Tactical Fighter Wing (F-111) 552nd Airborne Warning and Control Wing (E-3A) 150th Tactical Fighter Group, Air National Guard (A-7) 121st Tactical Fighter Wing, Air National Guard Reconnaissance squadrons Tactical airlift squadrons Conventional Strategic Projection Force Various other units	30,000
NAVY	
3 Aircraft carrier battle groups 1 Amphibious Ready Group 5 Squadrons of antisubmarine warfare patrol aircraft 18 Near-term prepositioning ships	42,000
MARINE CORPS	
Marine amphibious force (division + wing) 7th Marine Amphibious Brigade	50,000
Total--All Services	222,000

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office from data contained in Fact Sheet, Public Affairs Office, HQ Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, August 1982.

for assessing the broader issues of NATO's defense and the U.S. role in it, and the implications of the RDF for the U.S. budget.

Plan of the Paper

For an assessment of the desirability of a larger or smaller RDF with regard to the effects on the U.S. commitment to NATO and on the defense budget, several types of information can be useful. The remainder of this chapter recapitulates the background leading to the current deliberations about the RDF, outlines three possible RDFs of very different sizes, abilities, and costs, and reviews the policy implications of decisions about the RDF.

To provide a guide to considering the merits of RDFs of various sizes, Chapter II analyzes the military capabilities and possible applications of each of three RDF force levels and some possible threats the RDF could confront. Chapter III examines the implications for the NATO commitment of the RDFs of alternate sizes; the chapter compares the current balance of NATO and Warsaw Pact forces and the effect that the deployment of each RDF force level could have on that balance. Chapter III also shows the cost of simultaneously maintaining the current balance and deploying various versions of the RDF. Chapter IV, using the Administration's currently planned program as a basis, analyzes the time that would be required to deploy each version of the RDF and estimates the resources needed to achieve a reasonably speedy delivery. Chapter V examines the support requirements--such as transportation, communication, and construction--associated with each version of the RDF. The chapter then estimates the ability of the current military structure to support each force level and determines the costs of meeting shortfalls.

BACKGROUND ON THE RDF

Implicit in any decision about the appropriate size of the RDF and the nation's fiscal commitment to it are questions about what objectives the RDF is to accomplish. In its short history, the RDF has undergone considerable shifts in geographic emphasis and definitions of purpose.

History

In 1977, a presidential directive called for a mobile force capable of responding to worldwide contingencies but to be established without

diverting forces from NATO or Korea. 3/ Not until the aftermath of the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the acknowledgment of a Soviet combat brigade in Cuba in that same year, however, did a concerted effort to establish the force envisioned in the directive begin. These events led to President Carter's announcement in October 1979 of the formation of the RDF. Conceived as a force with a global orientation, the RDF soon focused its attention and planning on the Persian Gulf region. This narrowing of emphasis was precipitated by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on 26 December 1979 and the subsequent announcement of the so-called "Carter Doctrine" with respect to the Gulf region in January 1980. 4/ The Carter Doctrine stated that the Persian Gulf area, because of its oil fields, was of vital interest to the United States, and that any outside attempt to gain control in the area would be "repelled by use of any means necessary, including military force."

With evolving interpretations of the RDF's purpose and geographic orientation, the command structure of the RDF has also undergone repeated change. Operation of an RDF headquarters (formally known until 1 January 1983 as the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force--RDJTF) officially began at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida on 1 March 1980. Initially commanded by a Lieutenant General, the headquarters was adjoined to the U.S. Readiness Command also located in Tampa. This command relationship proved unsatisfactory, however, as there was no single channel of communication through which the RDF commander could communicate directly to the Secretary of Defense on matters specifically relating to the RDF.

On 24 April 1981, Secretary of Defense Weinberger announced that the RDJTF would evolve into a separate command with specific geographic responsibilities. The planned change was favorably received in the Congress, though not unanimously. Both the Senate Committee on Armed Services and the Senate Committee on Appropriations expressed their concern ". . .about the absence of an organized effort to plan and provide for possible power projection requirements in other Third World areas which are also critical to U.S. interests." The decision to focus the attention of

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3. See E. Asa Bates, "The Rapid Deployment Force - Fact or Fiction," Journal of the Royal United States Institute for Defense Studies (June 1981), p. 23.

4. See President Carter's State of the Union address before the Congress, 23 January 1980.

the RDJTF solely on Southwest Asia--to the exclusion of other areas, such as central and southern Africa--did little to ease this concern. 5/

With the start of this calendar year, the RDJTF became a separate unified command known as the U.S. Central Command. The commander enjoys the same stature as other theater commanders, and he reports directly to the Secretary of Defense. His operational planning responsibility is limited to Southwest Asia only. 6/ (The Department of Defense distinguishes between the U.S. Central Command and the RDF. The Central Command is primarily a planning headquarters; the forces available to it are the RDF. For simplicity, this study uses the term RDF throughout.)

The Central Command's focus on Southwest Asia does not imply that the RDF could not be used elsewhere; RDF forces could be assigned to other commands if needed. The Central Command, however, will focus only on Southwest Asia. Thus, this study also focuses on that area, since it is where the RDF would most probably be used.

THE SIZES, MISSIONS, AND BUDGETARY COSTS OF THREE POSSIBLE RDFS

The appropriate size of the RDF--and accordingly, its budgetary costs--hinges largely on what military purpose the force is intended to serve. This study examines RDFs manned at three levels:

- The Administration's planned expanded RDF, consisting perhaps of 440,000 personnel;
- The current 222,000-man force; and
- A smaller force of 165,000 personnel.

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5. See Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations, Report No. 97-58, p. 37; and Department of Defense Appropriation, Report No. 97-273, p. 7.

6. See U.S. Department of Defense, Annual Report to Congress Fiscal Year 1984, p. 194.

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A Larger RDF--Without and With Additional Forces

The larger version of the RDF envisioned by the current Administration, which might eventually consist of some 440,000 troops, would be charged with a dual mission. Its first commitment would be to deter aggression against any Southwest Asian country--with the Soviet threat to Iran seen as the most demanding threat. Should deterrence fail, however, this RDF could be expected to be capable of repelling a Soviet assault on Iran. Despite this sizable assignment, the Administration's plan proposes no increase in funding for ground combat forces for the RDF. Nor would the Administration procure additional mobility forces beyond those now planned for an RDF half the size.

To establish an effective force of this size without adding to costs, the Administration is prepared to relax some of its commitments to NATO, hoping that the European allies will take greater responsibility for the defense of NATO than they now do. 7/ The Administration hopes the allies would provide not only additional combat forces but also additional support forces. If they did not, then NATO's capabilities vis-a-vis those of the Warsaw Pact alliance would be reduced, and the risks would be higher. For example, if in the event of NATO/Pact war, NATO had to do without the U.S. ground forces drawn off for use in the larger RDF, then, by the thirtieth day of a conflict, the NATO position in the balance of ground forces could be eroded by about 12 percent. Similarly, even with the mobility improvements now planned, it would take about 40 days to deploy all the unit equipment of the larger RDF to the Persian Gulf, compared to 30 days for the current RDF.

Maintaining NATO capabilities while also expanding the RDF would require additional combat, support, and mobility forces specifically for the RDF. Costs for added forces--though not proposed by the Administration--would be substantial. Assuming the RDF were expanded and equipped with assets adequate not only to counter the Soviets in Iran but also to sustain the current NATO commitment, the costs in defense budget authority over five years would rise by a total of about $44.9 billion (see Table 2).

The Current RDF Without and With Added Forces

As the RDF was conceived, its emphasis was deterrence of Soviet aggression. Another important objective was the support of friendly and

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7. See Statement of Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger before the House Committee on the Budget (23 September 1981), p. 9.

TABLE 2. PROJECTED CUMULATIVE BUDGET AUTHORITY INCREASES AND SAVINGS (-) FOR RDFs OF THREE SIZES, RELATIVE TO ADMINISTRATION PLAN (1984-1988, in billions of 1984 dollars)

Cost Components	RDF of 440,000		RDF of 222,000		RDF of 165,000
	No Added Forces a/	Added Forces	No Added Forces	Added Forces	
Added Army Combat Forces	0	37.8 b/	0	18.9	0
Mobility Forces	0	5.8	0	0	-11.0
Support Forces c/	0	1.3	0	1.2	0
Total	0	44.9	0	20.1	-11.0

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office, from data provided by the Department of Defense.

a. Administration plan.

b. Added tactical air wings may also be needed but are not included in these costs. Costs over the next five years would equal at least $3 billion per added wing.

c. Includes persons to meet support shortfalls plus those needed to recruit and train added personnel.

politically moderate states against attack from hostile neighbors or subversion. Designers of the original RDF did consider fighting Soviets in Iran as possible, but they viewed the 222,000- man RDF as a sizable deterrent.

The original RDF did set precedent for the Administration's proposal in allowing a relaxation of the U.S. commitments to NATO and encouraging the allies to do more with respect to combat and support forces. Inasmuch as only half the number of NATO-committed personnel would be diverted to an engagement involving the current RDF, however, the erosion of U.S. NATO reinforcements would be diminished by half.

Nonetheless, if ground combat, mobility, and support forces were added to counter the diminution of U.S. force strength in NATO, the budgetary costs of even the current RDF would be significant. If implemented over five years, this force augmentation would add approximately $20.1 billion to total defense budget authority (see Table 2), though again, no such increases have been proposed by the Administration.

A Smaller RDF

The RDF could be designed--and appreciably reduced in size--for less ambitious, though perhaps more plausible, applications. For example, a smaller RDF might be particularly well suited as a security force to reinforce a friendly state subject to insurrection or spillover effects from local conflicts in the Gulf region. An RDF of 165,000--roughly three-fourths the size of the current RDF--could not sustain theater military operations. But it would suffice for limited actions requiring units that are rapidly deployable and specially trained in the political and military sensitivities of the area. A force this small and specially adapted could be created using forces from all services at little cost to U.S. commitments elsewhere. It would require no additional budgetary costs. In fact, over five years, savings of about $11 billion could be realized if some of the mobility assets to be purchased in part for the RDF were cancelled (see Table 2).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Implicit in the foregoing review of possible sizes of RDF is a question concerning the United States' traditional and current commitments relative to its possible obligations elsewhere. Under what conditions would an RDF that necessitated any appreciable diminution of U.S. commitments in Europe and Northeast Asia be acceptable?

The Administration has made reasonably clear the rationale for its choice of a larger RDF with extensive implications for NATO. In September 1981, Secretary Weinberger indicated that the threats facing NATO and Northeast Asia appeared less urgent than those in Southwest Asia. 8/ A reorientation of emphasis was thus appropriate. Further, the Secretary argued, the United States' European allies would have to make up

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8. See Statement of Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger before the House Committee on the Budget (23 September 1981), p. 9.

for this shift by doing more in their own behalf than they are now doing. (At the same time, the Administration has made clear its intent to limit any reorientation of emphasis to U.S. forces that reinforce NATO after a war began. The Administration has argued forcefully against any withdrawal of U.S. combat forces stationed in NATO during peacetime.)

Consistent with its position, the Administration has assigned to the RDF only those costs associated with its special missions and not the costs of maintaining any forces or adding new ones. Examples of costs assigned to the RDF include selected costs of training exercises, military construction, and prepositioned ammunition. In 1983, these items are estimated by the Defense Department to generate a cost in budget authority for the RDF of $737 million. (See Appendix A for discussion of this and other ways to assess RDF costs.)

Nonetheless, though not now proposed by the Administration, an expansion of U.S. ground combat forces could eventually be proposed to compensate for the loss to NATO implied by an RDF augmentation and deployment. Indeed, Secretary Weinberger, testifying before the U.S. House of Representatives Budget Committee indicated that, though no new forces have been generated for the RDF, "we might want to do so in the future." 9/ Reflecting a similar sentiment, the Chief of Staff of the Army has stated that, in the long run, the Army will need to add from three to five new divisions to its current 16 to meet the twofold demands of NATO support and an RDF deployment. 10/ Any such additions would add substantially to costs.

Given the long-term implications of the RDF for the defense budget and for NATO, the Congress may wish to review the Administration's plan as it has emerged thus far. Should the Congress agree with the Administration's policy of reorienting forces and resources from NATO to Southwest Asia, then it may, as the Administration proposes, endorse the larger RDF with no additional funds. Should the Congress feel that reorienting so many forces away from NATO is not appropriate, then it may elect to provide additional resources for the RDF. On the other hand, especially in light of the pressures now affecting the federal budget, the Congress may elect to limit the RDF to its current level or to an even lower one.

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9. See Statement of Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger before the House Committee on the Budget (23 September 1981), p. 9.

10. Reported in "Army Chief Reports a 'Renaissance'," The New York Times, October 15, 1982, p. 24.

Figure 1.

Area of Concern for U.S. Rapid Deployment Forces in Southwest Asia

SOURCE: Adapted by Congressional Budget Office from U.S. Department of Defense Annual Report FY82.

CHAPTER II. COMBAT REQUIREMENTS FOR ALTERNATIVE RDF FORCE SIZES

Underlying any decision about the appropriate size and configuration of the Rapid Deployment Forces and the budgetary commitment to them are questions about the nature and magnitude of the threats they would confront. The desired capabilities of the RDF are in large measure a function of these factors. This chapter therefore reviews the configuration of RDFs set at the three size levels outlined in Chapter I and assesses those against the background of possible enemy threats. Table 3 presents the force composition of the three RDFs analyzed. Inasmuch as planning for the RDF is now narrowly focused on Southwest Asia (illustrated in Figure 1), the analysis also is limited to that region, although in theory, the RDF could be used elsewhere.

THE LARGER RDF PLANNED BY THE ADMINISTRATION

Press reports suggest that the Administration will nearly double the size of the current RDF during the next five years. The effects on the four services would not be uniform, however. The three Navy carrier battle groups now available to the RDF would remain the same as under the current planning. The other services, though, would significantly increase the combat forces they make available to the RDF (see Table 3). Army combat forces would increase from three and one-third divisions to five, up by about half; Air Force combat forces would grow from seven wings to ten; Marine Corps forces would rise from one and one-third to two Marine amphibious forces, again, up by about half.

The configuration of this force is designed primarily to counter what the Administration believes is the most serious threat to Southwest Asia: a Soviet invasion of Iran. 1/ Inherent in this thinking is the belief that all contingencies of a lesser nature could be handled using only part of the larger RDF. Thus, if the United States could defeat a Soviet invasion of

1. See Francis J. West, Jr., Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs on S. 2248, Sea Power and Force Projection, testimony before the Senate Committee on Armed Services, 97:2 (12 March 1982), part 6, p. 3723.

TABLE 3. FORCE COMPOSITION OF THREE POSSIBLE RDFs, BY SERVICE

	Larger RDF	Current RDF	Smaller RDF
Army Combat Divisions a/	5	3 1/3	1
Navy			
Aircraft Carrier Battle Groups b/	3	3	3
Amphibious Ready Group c/	1	1	1
Air Force Tactical Fighter Wings d/	10	7	5
Marine Corps			
Marine Amphibious Forces e/	2	1 1/3	1

SOURCE: Compiled by CBO from information provided by the Public Affairs Office, Headquarters RDJTF, and press reports.

a. Each division consists of 16,000 to 18,000 soldiers.

b. Each would comprise one aircraft carrier plus six surface escort ships.

c. Typically consists of three to five amphibious ships including an amphibious assault ship.

d. Each would consist of approximately 72 aircraft.

e. Each would consist of a ground combat division, a tactical fighter wing, and sustaining support, totaling approximately 45,000 people.

Iran, it could carry out the Carter Doctrine that commits the United States to repel any outside attempt to gain control of another nation in the Persian Gulf region.

Assessing the Soviet Threat in the Gulf Region

The Administration's belief that a Soviet invasion of Iran ought to be the motivating threat stems mostly from known Soviet military capabilities in the area. In all, the Soviets have about 170,000 troops stationed near Iran in peacetime, and the number could grow to 380,000 after a relatively short period of mobilization. North of Iran, in the southern part of the Soviet Union, are stationed 24 Soviet divisions. Most of these are so-called "cadre" divisions; in peacetime, they are manned at only about 25 percent, and during mobilization, they would have to be filled by reserve forces. 2/ Nonetheless, the United States estimates that these divisions could be deployed within a matter of weeks of a Soviet decision to mobilize. In addition, six Soviet airborne divisions are stationed throughout the northwestern part of the Soviet Union. Though half the size of a U.S. airborne division (8,500 troops in a Soviet division, as opposed to 17,000 in a U.S. division), a Soviet airborne division is well equipped with light armored fighting vehicles that can provide good ground mobility and protection for soldiers. In addition, the Soviets now have roughly 95,000 troops deployed in Afghanistan. They still face considerable effective resistance there, but should they secure their hold, Afghanistan would provide an excellent staging area from which to launch air and ground attacks on Iran.

The Administration may also regard a Soviet invasion of Iran as the most serious threat because of Iran's strategic position on the shipment route of most Southwest Asian oil. At present, about 20 percent of all the West's oil is shipped through the Persian Gulf and through the narrow Strait of Hormuz. Both the Gulf and the Strait lie on the southwestern shore of Iran. A successful invasion of Iran could cut off these oil supplies and exert severe economic pressures on the West.

In combination, these factors suggest that a Soviet invasion of Iran is indeed a serious threat. If the United States wishes to have confidence in its military ability to halt a Soviet invasion of Iran, it may well need a substantial force with a rapid deployment capability. On the other hand, even as large an RDF as envisioned by the Administration might have trouble against a determined Soviet invasion of Iran. Deploying the 440,000-man RDF would require shipping (besides troops) about 1.5 million tons of materiel from U.S. bases over a distance of 12,000 miles, and doing it in six weeks' time.

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2. For an assessment of the Soviet strength in the Gulf region, see for example, "The Soviet Military Threat to the Gulf: The Operational Dimension," unpublished paper, The Brookings Institution (1981).

Such an operation would be highly demanding and subject to many pitfalls and uncertainties. It would, in all probability, require active support from Iran itself and from Turkey--which might not be available. Turkish air bases would be necessary if the United States were to succeed in using tactical aircraft to interdict Soviet forces in northwest Iran. The willingness of the Turks to provide necessary support is far from certain, however. (Though a member nation of NATO, Turkey might be reluctant to serve as an RDF staging area because of the boundary it shares with the Soviet Union.) Similarly, staging bases in Iran would no doubt be needed to move the many tons of materiel. In the current climate of hostile relations between the United States and Iran, that Iran would welcome U.S. forces in their country seems highly unlikely. 3/

The likelihood of a Soviet invasion's occurring at all is questionable. Were the Soviets to undertake such an invasion, they would invite great military risk. The NATO allies, faced with loss of critical oil supplies, could seriously consider a counterattack against Warsaw Pact forces in Europe; this would open a new front on which the West is in a relatively better military position. Furthermore, the political hazards to the Soviet Union could be as great as the military ones. An attack would draw criticism of the Soviet Union as an expansionist power, with military goals far in excess of those necessary for self defense. Soviet credibility and influence in the Third World could thus be severely damaged.

Tactical and logistic problems could also impede a Soviet assault on Iran. An overland attack against any resistance at all would be difficult. The topography of northern Iran, characterized by mountainous terrain with narrow passes and deep gorges, would make movement slow and dangerous, favoring defending forces. Air cover for advancing Soviet forces would also be limited, as Soviet fighter aircraft would have insufficient range to provide continuous tactical air support to ground forces far to the south. As a result, intermediate staging bases would have to be established in Iran if the Soviets hoped to push south to the Gulf.

These difficulties suggest that a more likely Soviet tactic would be a limited attack to secure the northwest region of Iran. Such an action would be motivated by logistic concerns similar to those underlying the Soviets' aggression against Afghanistan. A limited attack there would allow the Soviets to consolidate their forces, establish forward operating

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3. In the wake of Iranian radicals' holding 52 U.S. citizens hostage for 15 months, diplomatic relations between the United States and Iran were severed in April 1980, and they have not been restored.

bases for air and ground forces, and position themselves for a deeper attack to the south. 4/ Should the Soviets choose this course of action, however, they would forgo the advantage of making a quick, deep thrust into Iran and consolidating a position around the Gulf before other countries--and the United States in particular--could react.

For all these reasons, a Soviet invasion of Iran appears to most military analysts to be a highly implausible prospect. The Administration agrees that limited regional conflicts or subversion are in fact far more likely. 5/ Yet it has decided that RDF sizing and planning should be based on the worst possible threat.

THE CURRENT RDF

The current RDF, with its 222,000 persons, contains much of the same early deploying ground combat power of the Administration's larger RDF (see Table 3). With more than three Army divisions, one and one-third Marine amphibious forces, seven Air Force tactical fighter wings, and four naval groups, this force possesses considerable ability. It is not, however, suited to the "worst possible threat." It might be adequate to deter a Soviet invasion of Iran; but it might have difficulty actually stopping a concerted Soviet invasion.

Assessing the RDF's Force Capabilities

The types of forces, not the number, in the current RDF account for the relatively limited capacity. The Marine Corps forces, for example, traditionally operate within 50 kilometers of a beachhead. Though extending their use beyond this range has precedent (for example, in

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4. For a more in-depth discussion of this scenario, see Joshua M. Epstein, "Soviet Vulnerabilities in Iran and the RDF Deterrent," International Security (Fall 1981); and Dennis Ross, "Considering Soviet Threats to the Persian Gulf," International Security (Fall 1981).

5. See Francis J. West, Jr., Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs on S. 2248, Sea Power and Force Projection, testimony before the Senate Committee on Armed Services, 97:2 (March 12, 1982), part 6, p. 3723.

Vietnam), their equipment and structure does not make them ideally suited for stopping a Soviet invasion of Iran; such an effort would mean combat operations deep inland against a heavily armored Soviet ground combat force. Two of the three Army divisions included in the current RDF are also limited in ability because of their relatively light nature. Once landed, the 82nd Airborne Division and 101st Airmobile Division lack even a lightly armored capability to provide the necessary antitank capability and mobility. Thus, these divisions' usefulness lies primarily in their ability to fight in mountains against a limited armor force or light infantry forces. Stopping a Soviet invasion of Iran might require U.S. forces to engage Soviet armor in desert terrain. Only the third Army division in the current RDF, the 24th Mechanized Divison, possesses the tactical mobility and offensive power to engage in armor battles on desert terrain.

The current RDF also contains only seven tactical fighter wings (about 504 planes). Though additional aircraft might be available from the aircraft carrier currently operating in the Indian Ocean, few would have sufficient range to conduct air operations against Soviet forces in northwestern Iran. 6/ As a result, there might not be sufficient U.S. aircraft to provide both the capability to interdict Soviet movements and to defend U.S. forces against Soviet attacks.

Against actions other than concerted Soviet invasion, however, the current RDF would have considerable combat power. Besides the 130,000 ground troops, the ground forces in the current RDF contain approximately 400 M60 tanks, 300 attack helicopters, and 600 antitank missiles. Though this force is numerically smaller than the ground forces of Iran (150,000), Syria (170,000), or Iraq (300,000), few analysts would question the superior capacity of U.S. forces. The effectiveness of U.S. materiel has been proven in recent combat in the Middle East.

Thus, the current RDF could probably serve successfully in support of friendly Arab states involved in regional conflicts--which are not unlikely. Hostilities between Oman and the Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen, or between Ethiopia and Somalia, could certainly erupt again in the future and, in fact, would be much more likely than any overt Soviet move into the region.

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6. The United States maintains at least one and sometimes two aircraft carriers in the Indian Ocean. These carriers are drawn from the 7th Fleet in the Pacific or the 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean.

THE SMALLER RDF

Subversion and internal upheavals are a serious threat to U.S. interests in Southwest Asia. Recent examples include the alleged Iranian attempt at a coup in Bahrain in 1981 and Libyan attempts at subversion in Egypt, Sudan, and Somalia. The Department of Defense believes that these incidents are of particular interest to the Soviets as a means of gaining influence in the area. In fact, the department has indicated that the Soviets are far more likely to encourage subversion as a policy rather than risk war with the United States through direct military aggression. 7/

The record of U.S. involvement in armed conflict since World War II also suggests that minor conflict is the more likely scenario. One study has enumerated 215 incidents since 1945 in which the United States used military force to further its political interests. Only 45, or about 20 percent, involved ground combat forces. Only about 5 percent of the incidents involved ground combat forces of division size or larger (a division consists of about 16,000 to 18,000 troops). 8/

These factors would not justify a large force designed to fight in a major battle against either Soviet invaders or even the armies of lesser powers. Rather, they suggest a much smaller force specifically tailored and trained to counter subversive attempts against the governments of friendly nations. Such a smaller RDF, consisting of about 165,000 troops, could include one Army division, one Marine amphibious force, three carrier battle groups, and five tactical fighter wings (see Table 3). Trained specifically for quick responses to the needs of friendly countries, the force would be sensitive to the military and political needs of the client governments. Training could concentrate more on peacekeeping than on combat. Forces would be familiar with the political history of the region, the various political factions, the loyalties of the armed forces, and the driving religious and other cultural loyalties of the people.

Though manned by 75,000 ground groops, this smaller RDF would still equal or exceed the size of many Mideastern armies; it would not, however,

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7. See Francis J. West, Jr., Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs on S. 2248, Sea Power and Force Projection, testimony before the Senate Committee on Armed Services, 97:2 (March 12, 1982), part 6, p. 3723.

8. See Barry M. Blechman and Stephen S. Kaplan, Force Without War, The Brookings Institution (1978).

have the tanks and other ground combat capabilities of the current RDF. Thus, its value in regional conflicts would be more limited. Moreover, the smaller RDF would be badly outnumbered by Soviet ground troops available to invade Iran. Thus, it could offer almost no resistance against a Soviet invasion. Some observers would also argue that, with the smaller RDF, the deterrent value of the RDF would be lost, inviting the Soviets to take a more aggressive military stance in Southwest Asia.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS IN DESIGNING AN RDF

The combat capability of the RDF could be affected by changes other that those that would alter its size or configuration. Effectiveness in the Iran scenario could be increased if greater tactical mobility and antitank combat power were available for the Army's light forces. The Army is currently structuring a prototype light division called a High Technology Light Division (HTLD). The HTLD is to have new types of vehicles that may have much of the firepower of today's heavy armored forces; but they will also be lighter and therefore more easily deployable. Tests are now under way, and the HTLDs might be available in the mid- to late 1980s. If the HTLD proves successful, restructuring Army light divisions might offer the RDF increased capability without greater numbers of forces.

Observers have also argued that the United States should increase its ground combat power primarily through the procurement of additional light armor. Rather than designing new vehicles, this approach would entail buying existing tanks armored lightly. Such tanks might carry less than half the armor now on the M60 tanks earmarked for use in the RDF. This would add firepower and lighten the airlift burden for deployment. (Chapter IV examines mobility needs, including airlift.)

Even without improvements such as the HTLD or light armored tanks, analysts differ about the capabilities of the current RDF and hence the need for a larger one. Both the current commander of the RDF and the former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy in the Carter Administration have argued that the anti-armor capability already available to the ground and air forces in the RDF could cope with anticipated armor threats in the Persian Gulf. Another analyst, however, argues that the current RDF does not have access to sufficient tanks and armored personnel carriers to contest the mechanized forces so prevalent in Southwest Asia. 9/ Other questions, however, have as important a bearing on this debate.

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9. See "The Rapid Deployment Force--Too Large, Too Small or Just Right for Its Task?" National Journal, March 12, 1982, p. 454.

CHAPTER III. THE EFFECTS OF AN RDF MOBILIZATION ON THE U.S. COMMITMENT TO NATO

Because the Rapid Deployment Forces are composed primarily of U.S. forces committed to NATO, the size of RDF decided on will determine the magnitude of the RDF's implications for NATO. However many forces were drawn off from the NATO defense for an engagement involving the RDF, that many forces would become unavailable to NATO. In peacetime, such a shift need be of little importance. In the event of two simultaneous wars--one in Europe involving NATO, the other elsewhere involving the RDF--the implications could take on sizable dimensions. The need to consider these implications seems particularly pressing in view of the Administration's plan to increase the size of the RDF.

For each of the versions of the RDF outlined in Chapter I, this chapter examines the effects that an RDF deployment could have in the event of simultaneous wars in Europe and Southwest Asia. As background for judging the importance of these effects, the chapter begins with a brief description of the present-day balance of NATO and Warsaw Pact forces.

To provide another perspective for assessing the appropriate size and configuration of the RDF, the chapter also estimates the costs of adding enough new forces to maintain the present commitment to NATO while also deploying an RDF. The estimate suggests that, should the U.S. armed services attempt to increase their forces to avoid cutting back on the NATO commitment, the pressure such efforts would exert on future defense budgets could be considerable.

THE BALANCE OF FORCES IN NATO AND THE U.S. COMMITMENT

A strong commitment to NATO has been the focal point of U.S. defense planning--and spending--for many years. At present, the United States Army maintains in West Germany the combat equivalent of more than four "heavy" divisions. These are complemented by an Air Force contingent that consists of 28 tactical fighter squadrons (most squadrons have 24 planes each). 1/ Navy forces are also on patrol in NATO waters in the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea.

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1. See U.S. Department of Defense, Annual Report to Congress, Fiscal Year 1983, pp. III-5, III-38.

In the event of a European conflict, U.S. plans call for supplementing these forces within ten days of mobilization with an additional six Army divisions and 60 Air Force fighter squadrons normally stationed in the continental United States. 2/ Another five Army divisions could be deployed to NATO within the first three months. Thus, under current planning, all active Army divisions but one are committed to NATO (the one in Korea would remain there). Moreover, virtually all of the active Air Force fighter squadrons, supplemented with reserve fighter squadrons, are committed to NATO.

The Balance Today

Despite this substantial U.S. commitment, doubts about the outcome of a conflict in Europe between the NATO and Warsaw Pact alliances persist. A war, NATO assumes, would be initiated by a Warsaw Pact attack, using conventional (nonnuclear) weapons. The Pact would attack with a large number of ground divisions, perhaps focusing its assault on the north German plain, which offers good terrain for movement of armored divisions. In an attempt to destroy NATO's air bases, resupply facilities, and nuclear capabilities, the Pact might also mount a major air attack. The NATO allies would attempt to defend as far east as possible in order to minimize any loss of territory.

Force Ratios. Force ratios are a basis commonly used for assessing the potential capability of NATO forces relative to those of Warsaw Pact. Though these ratios cannot capture certain important but intangible factors such as quality of leadership, tactics, morale, and weather, they do give decisionmakers and planners a rough gauge of relative force capabilities and trends.

As a basis for assessing the force ratios, this study uses an analytical tool devised by the Department of Defense. Called an Armored Division Equivalent (ADE), this tool provides a measure of relative combat power over time. By this technique, each weapon is assigned a numerical value based on its technical capability and likely usefulness in combat. The "score" for a given unit is the sum of the values for all of the weapons available to it. That value is then divided by the equivalent score for a generic U.S. armored division in order to measure all units by a common

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2. See "Pentagon Draws Up First Strategy for Fighting a Long Nuclear War, The New York Times, May 30, 1982, p. 12.